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THE MAGIC CIRCLE

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THE CHANNEL-STANE

OR

SWEEPINGS FRAE THE RINKS

First Series.

Oh! for the channel stane!
The fell good game the channel stane!
There's no a game that e'er I saw,
Can match auld Scotland's channel stane.

THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD

EDINBURGH
RICHARD CAMERON, 18 GEORGE STREET
MDCCCLXXXIII

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THE CHANNEL-STANE.

THE chief object of this work is to collect, and put together in a convenient and handy form, the fugitive literature relating to the Game of Curling. The Prospectus recently issued set forth, that, with the assistance of subscribers forwarding such information as came to their knowledge, the matter might be easily effected. To a certain extent this has already been accomplished, and we are in hopes that as the work progresses, more material will be forthcoming, whereby not only a comprehensive but at the same time an exhaustive collection may be the result. To further this object, all interesting references to the game, whether in prose or in verse, should be forwarded to the Editor, to be made use of in their proper time and place.

It will be our endeavour to render each Series as interesting and amusing as possible, by selecting from the common stock poems, historical

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notices, songs, and anecdotes in proper proportions.

Returning our best thanks to the gentlemen who have so promptly and willingly accorded permission to reprint articles in which they hold a proprietary right, and to all who have kindly forwarded literary contributions, we trust that further assistance will be cheerfully given in carrying the work to a satisfactory issue.

Sufficient material is in hand for a Second Series, which will be issued shortly.

The Third Series will contain a "Bibliotheca Curliana," which will embrace, so far as has been ascertained, every separately printed production relating to the Game of Curling, but in order to make this very important portion of the work complete and accurate, the Editor hopes that early intimation of any such (either privately printed or published) in possession of subscribers will be made to him. J. M.

EDINBURGH, *November* 1883.

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CURLING.

WHEN a black frost seals up the ground, and ice covers our ponds and lochs, among the amusements then open to those north of the Tweed there is none more healthful and exhilarating than the game of curling, the mode of playing at which we shall presently explain for the benefit of our non-initiated readers. This "manly Scottish exercise," as the old poet Pennycuik calls it, is, as we once before hinted, the worthiest rival of golf in Scotland. Alas, however, it fights this battle under immense disadvantages; the good old times seem to have passed away, when for weeks on end,

> O'er burn and loch the warlock Frost
> A crystal brig would lay,

and good ice might be confidently counted on for a long time. But being a pastime solely depending upon ice, and good ice, for its existence, this only makes the ardent votaries of the game the

more eager to take every advantage of such fleeting chances as the variable winters of our day send them. Night has often been added to day, when the interest in a great match has been more intense than the frost, and the ice has shown any signs of passing away.

It is *always* a trial for a curler to see a sheet of ice unoccupied; and when, on a Sunday, the "crystal brig" on some fine loch lies smooth and keen, who has not seen hopeful enthusiasts taking a glance at the virgin expanse, with expression of countenance impossible to misunderstand! The marvel is that the strong temptation is so universally resisted, and that no effect has followed the example set by that Bishop of Orkney two centuries ago, whose "process," says Baillie in his Letters, "came before us; he was a curler on the Sabbath-day."

No game promotes sociality more than curling; none unites on one common platform the different classes of society better than it does.

> The tenant and his jolly laird,
> The pastor and his flock,

join in the game without patronage on one side

or any loss of respect on the other. Harmony and friendly feeling prevail; and if, on the ice as elsewhere, all men are *not* equal, it is because a quick eye, a sound head, and a steady hand make now the shepherd, now the laird, "king o' a' the core."

Though so eminently a Scottish game, evidence goes to prove that the pastime was brought to us from the continent not very long ago—three hundred years or so. Some ultra-patriotic curlers claim for it indeed a native origin, or at least one lost in the mists of antiquity, citing a passage in *Ossian* to prove that the Fingalian heroes beguiled their winters with the game, because in one passage it is said "Swaran bends at the stone of might;" but this notwithstanding, it is quite clear that, as in the case of golf, we are indebted to outsiders for the first rough sketches of the "roaring game." The technical language of the game is all of Low Country origin, and it is supposed to have been introduced into this country by the Flemish emigrants who settled in Scotland about the end of the fifteenth century. No mention of it is made by any writer for long after this; but

it must have been well known in 1607, for Camden, in his *Britannia*, published in that year, says that in the little island of Copinsha, near the Orkneys, "are to be found in great plenty excellent stones for the game called curling." *

At this time and for long after, the game appears to have been merely a rough kind of quoiting on ice; indeed for a great part of the last century its common name in this country was *Kuting*. The stones of that day, rough undressed blocks —so different from the polished missiles now used—had no handle, but merely a kind of hollow or niche for the finger and thumb, and were evidently intended to be *thrown* for at least part of the course. Since these days, great strides have been taken in the improvement of the game; now it is highly scientific, and with its many delicate strokes, its "wicks," calculations of angles, of force, and of bias, it may without presumption be called the billiards of ice. In some places, however, the old game with its primitive implements,

* The Editor of *The Curlers' Magazine*, published at Dumfries in 1842, states that this "rock has since been found to be useless for any such purpose."—Ed.

usually flattish stones from the bed of the nearest stream, still holds its place under the name of "channelling."

In the bead-roll of curling are no such mighty names as those that golf boasts of; our winter game has not got mixed up with historic events and personages, as the older pastime has; but what her devotees lack in greatness is made up by the intense affection shewn by them in all ages for their favourite sport. It appears to have been a great game with poets. Allan Ramsay and Burns allude to it, and a host of minor bards have sung its praises at varying lengths, but with uniform appreciation of its excellences. One of the most eloquent passages in Christopher North's *Winter Rhapsody* deplores the failing popularity of the game in his later days; for like many other good things, curling has had its ups and downs in this world. In some few districts where it once flourished for a time, the interest in the game has died out; but of later years the establishment of so many clubs has given a new impetus to the game, which now prospers in its season beyond all former experience. The south-western

districts of Scotland were long the chosen home of curling, and the players of Lanark and Dumfriesshire were specially renowned for their great skill in the art; but now it has spread over the whole country, and the grand matches of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club witness the friendly rivalry of worthy foemen from Maidenkirk to John o' Groat's, and excite the enthusiasm of branch clubs south of the Tweed, and even across the Atlantic.

At Edinburgh, perhaps as much as at any other place, has the game prospered within the last century, though in one point the game has lost a recognition it once had, if we believe the old tradition that, about a hundred and fifty years ago, the Town-Council used to go to the ice in all the pomp and circumstance that it now reserves for the Commissioner's procession, with a band playing "appropriate airs" before it, which discoursed sweet music while the fathers of the city gave an hour or two to the game. The citizens then played on the Nor' Loch, a sheet of water which in those days divided the Old Town from the New; when it was drained they went to the ponds at Canonmills, and subsequently to Dud-

dingston Loch, where arose the Duddingston Curling Club, instituted in 1795, which has done great things in infusing a new spirit into the game. Among its members have been many fine curlers and good fellows, famed in other fields than this; and even if the Club had done nothing beyond giving us the capital songs of Sir Alexander Boswell, Miller, and many others, it would have still deserved well of its country.

Of late years, however, there has arisen a mightier than it—the Royal Caledonian Curling Club—now forty years old, which numbers among its members most curlers of note, both at home and abroad; and to which are affiliated all the local societies, who once a year, when the weather permits, send their chosen champions to contend at the grand match held under the auspices of the Royal Club.

Let us now see how the game is played; and first we shall give what is perhaps the earliest description of the game on record, that given by Pennant in his *Tour* in 1792. "Of all the sports of these parts," he says, "that of curling is the favourite, and one unknown in England. It is an

amusement of the winter, and played on the ice by sliding from one mark to another great stones of from forty to seventy pounds weight, of a hemispherical form, with an iron or wooden handle at the top. The object of the player is to lay his stone as near the mark as possible, to guard that of his partner, which had been well laid before, or to strike his antagonist's."

The game is played on a carefully chosen piece of ice called the "rink," which should be forty-two yards long, unless special circumstances—such as thaw and consequently "dull" ice—require it to be shortened. This piece of ice should be as level, smooth, and free from cracks as possible; there is usually a trifling bias, which, however, to the skilled curler rather adds interest to the game, as it calls forth additional science in the play.

When the rink is chosen, a little mark is made at each end; this is called the "tee;" and near that point stands, in his turn, each player, whose object is to hurl or slide his stones to the opposite end, by a swinging motion of the arm. Each player also endeavours to place his stones nearer the tee than those of his opponents. In this

respect curling is precisely similar in principle to the well-known game of bowls. Round the tees are scratched several concentric circles or "broughs," a foot or so apart from each other, by which means the distance at which stones are lying from the goal is seen at a glance at any time during the continuance of the "end." In the normally long rink, a scratch called the hog-score—usually made wavy, to distinguish it from any accidental crack—is drawn across the line of play near each end, eight yards from the tee; and any stones that have not had impetus enough imparted to them to carry them over this line are "hogs," and are put off the ice as useless for that end. A common number of players in one rink is eight—four against four; but in some places more play on one side, and in others less, according to circumstances. As a general rule, each man plays two stones. The game is counted by points; and each stone of a side closer than their antagonists' nearest is a point which scores towards the game. It will be observed that "tees," "broughs," and "hog-scores" are in duplicate, for as in quoits and bowls, ends are changed after each round.

As in bowls so in curling, the office of "skip" of each side is usually given to the best player; and on his tact and judgment, besides knowledge of the exact amount of confidence he can place on the skill of each of his followers depends much of the success of his side. His chief duty is to stand at the tee for the purpose of directing and advising the play of each of his fellows, always playing last himself, that the critical shot on which perhaps victory or defeat hangs, may be in the best possible hands. Thus, in a rink of four players a side, the skips stand directors until their third men have played both their stones; upon which they proceed to the other end and play theirs.

The course of a game is generally something like this, though in no sport are there greater variations, or more circumstances calling forth all that judgment, skill, and experience only can teach. The "lead" or first player's object is simple: he tries to "draw" his shot—that is to play his stone up the ice towards the end where stands his skip directing, so that the stone may lie if possible within the rings; and if he is a skilful

player, his stone rests say a few feet short of the tee. The lead of the opposite side probably does as nearly the same, or with a little more force applied he perhaps knocks out his opponent's stone and lies in its place. Each of the leads having played two stones, the turn of the second player now comes. If an opposing stone lies near the tee, this player tries to change places with it by driving it away; but if a stone of his own side is next the tee, his play will be to "guard" it—that is, to lay his own stone in a direct line before it, so that the enemy may be less likely to dislodge it. As the game proceeds it gets more intricate—the stones round the tee may have been so placed that the "winner" is perfectly guarded from direct attack. Then is the time for the display of science: an experienced player by a cunning twist of the wrist may make his stone curl so as to carry it past the one that is supposed to guard the winning stone; or he may hit a stone near the winner in an oblique direction, and so cannon off it on to the winning stone and knock *it* away. This last is called "wicking," and is exactly a stroke of the same kind so necessary in billiards.

And so the game goes on—a game of give and take; but as Græme says, who can

> Follow the experienced player
> Through all the mysteries of his art, or teach
> The undisciplined how to wick, to guard,
> Or ride full out the stone that blocks the pass!

Stories innumerable are told of the delicate feats of aiming performed by enthusiasts of the game; and it is wonderful what skill is often shewn in the shots taken by good curlers with their unwieldy looking weapons; the narrow "ports" or openings between two stones that they can make their missiles pass through, and the dexterity they shew in calculating the bias of the ice and the exact amount of angle necessary to make their cannons. This too, with stones thirty or forty pounds in weight!

Each player provides himself with a broom to sweep up the ice before a too lazy stone; and upon judicious sweeping much of the game depends. The shouts of "Soop! soop!" that follow the signal of the skip; the excited gestures of the "capering combatants;" the constant cries of victory or defeat after the frequent changes of fortune; the general exhilaration of spirits attending a healthy and ex-

citing exercise in the bracing air of winter—all tend to make the scene an extraordinary one. Of course if, instead of the ordinary match or game among the members of a club, we are witnessing a 'bonspiel' or match between two rival clubs or parishes, the excitement is much intensified. Wraps put on by the careful goodwives' hands before the curlers left home are recklessly cast aside, brawny arms vigorously ply the besoms; strong lungs shout out encouragement; and the engrossed combatants await the issue of a shot in all the attitudes so cunningly portrayed in Sir George Harvey's well-known picture. Of course the point of most breathless interest is when perhaps one shot must decide the game. Hear how that inimitable curling song-writer, the Rev. Dr Duncan, describes that moment:

> A moment's silence, still as death,
> Pervades the anxious thrang, man,
> Then sudden bursts the victor's shout,
> Wi' hollos loud and lang, man;
> Triumphant besoms wave in air,
> And friendly banters fly, man,
> Whilst, cold and hungry, to the inn
> Wi' eager steps they hie, man;

where awaits them the true curlers' dinner of "beef

and greens;" to which simple viands the appetites, sharpened by the keen frost, do ample justice. And if a temperate tumbler of toddy is emptied, what then? A merry evening is spent; and however keen the contest has been, or strong the rivalry between closely matched parishes, we can always say with the old song:

> They met baith merry in the morn,
> At night they parted friends.

During these jovial evenings, "in words the fight renewed is fought again," and many stories of past curling are told—one of which we shall take an early opportunity of offering to our readers.—(*Chambers's Journal, No. 732, 5th January* 1878.)

Copinsha Stones.—"Dark coloured-species of limestone apparently dense and durable."

"We also saw lately a pair of curling stones, belonging to Principal Baird, which he brought from the Isle of Copinsha, interesting to curlers as being associated with the first historical notices of the game. Camden is mistaken, however, in calling them 'excellent'—for upon trial, according to a well-known connoisseur, they are found to be worth 'not a rap.'"—*Mem. Curl. Mabenensia.*

EXTRACTS FROM "THE HISTORY OF THE SANQUHAR CURLING SOCIETY."

(By James Brown, Esq., Secretary.)

THE author having kindly placed his book at our disposal, we have much pleasure in giving the following interesting extracts from it.—

CURLING STONES.

The material of which curling stones have been at different periods made in Sanquhar has been very varied in appearance and quality. For long, large numbers were made of a stone found in the parish, particularly in Lochburn, a small burn running round the eastern side of Sanquhar Moor, which came to be called Sanquhar Black. These stones are coal-black in appearance, and are very hard. They are highly thought of on account of their extreme durability and the keenness with which they run on drug ice. The supply of metal has been almost exhausted, and it is rare that a block of the real stuff can now be obtained. So long as the supply of blacks was

abundant nothing else almost seems to have been used, for the greater part of the very old stones that are in existence are made of that material. Metal of a grey description also abounded in the beds of the streams, particularly in Crawick. These were called "Crawick Greys," and were very keen. Very large and beautiful greys are to be found likewise in the bed of the Nith, in the neighbouring parish of Kirkconnel, and on the farm of Rigg there, which are, however, particularly subject to "drys," and it is only now and again that a really sound block can be obtained. The supply of "metal" becoming rather limited the curlers of Sanquhar were compelled to look out elsewhere, and from time to time all known kinds have been tried in succession. The tastes of Sanquhar curlers are in these matters rather fastidious, and so each sort has been "popular by turns and none for long." "Burnocks," got out of the Burnock water in Ochiltree, Ayrshire, have long held a high place in curlers' esteem. They are a beautiful mixed grey, and are durable and keen. "Craigheads," from the farm of Craighead, near the village of Crawford-

john, are likewise good stones. Their peculiar excellence is the property they have of being very keen on soft ice and in water; a great drawback to their general adoption is their great brittleness. Some do stand well, and any curler is fortunate who has a pair of that sort, but as a rule they are very easily broken. "Ailsa Craigs" are made of blocks of a granite-like appearance got at "Paddy's mile-stone," which run well also on soft ice. There are two distinct kinds, one of a greenish, and the other of a pure grey colour. They are large in size in proportion to their weight, so large as to be objectionable; they are also pretty expensive, but they make a showy and handsome pair of curling stones. "Crieffs" only became known to the curlers of this district a dozen years ago or so, through certain members attending at that time one of the great matches between the Clubs north and south of the Forth by whom several blocks of that metal were purchased. The "Crieffs" are of a great variety of colour, black, green, and white, while some resemble tortoise shell, and are rather pretty, but they do not appear to possess, beyond great

durability, any special excellence from a curling point of view. A few from Muirbrack, in the parish of Carsphairn, have also been made. They are of a peculiar reddish colour, light in proportion to their size, and run well. Among them all, however, those which have best kept their place in popular favour are Blacks, Burnocks, and Craigheads.

Curling stones from the specimens which still remain appear to have been in former times rather rudely formed. They are circular in shape, the bottom being ground and polished, but otherwise they are comparatively rough. Great improvements have from time to time been made on the style of manufacture, and now they are made quite elegant in shape and are beautifully finished. The stones made by Mr Kay, Ochiltree, and others, in that neighbourhood, ground and polished by machinery, are the very perfection of manufacture. At first, curling stones appear to have been all single-soled with strong iron handles of a rectangular shape, one end of which was run in with lead or other stuff into a hole cut between the centre and side of

the stone, so that when lifted by the handle the stone was balanced in the hand of the curler. Good handles of the kind are still made, which are called Dalmellington hands, at which place probably they were first brought out. In place of the handle being fixed into the stone, however, a bolt of iron is fixed into the side hole which protrudes about an inch or an inch and a half above the level of the top of the stone, on to which the handle is screwed by a little iron pin. These handles are used largely in New Cumnock and adjacent parishes. In Nithsdale, however, the handles now almost universally used are centre handles of a swan-neck form made of steel or brass mounted along the upper horizontal spike with hardwood of various kinds, polished, which gives them great variety of style and a very handsome appearance. For handles of this form those made at Wanlockhead stand unrivalled, but there being no patent for their manufacture we observe that makers in other places have taken them as a model and are bringing out very good imitations. In the case of single-soled stones, these centre handles have a screw of about an

inch and a half in length and half an inch in diameter, brought out from the plate by which it is screwed into the socket which is fixed into the centre hole of the stone. With double-soled stones the hole is drilled right through the centre of the stone from top to bottom; through this hole there passes an iron bolt on which the handle (the plate of which is drilled) is screwed, and which bolt is counter-sunk into each sole.

LOCHS.

The lochs or ponds used by the Sanquhar Society are three in number, the Black or Old Sanquhar Loch and the Green Loch, both on Sanquhar Moor, and the "Ward," on the farm of Blackaddie, situated within a very short distance of the town. Of the first named, Dr Simpson in his History of Sanquhar says—"It occupies a considerable breadth and is of great depth, having in the middle of it a little island on which in former times a building has existed." . . . . "It appears from the boggy nature of the ground surrounding the loch that

the loch itself is not artificial, but "a natural basin containing the present waters."

This was for many years the principal loch for curling. The game was, however, played on several strips of water which collected in hollows in some of the fields round the town. In one which was in a field on the farm of Townhead between the old and new roads a notable game was played between the wives of Sanquhar and Crawick Mill, who were directed by men. The game was, we understand, played with all the spirit and determination which usually characterise female fights. Upwards of forty years ago leave was obtained from the Town Council of Sanquhar to construct a loch on the farm belonging to the Corporation, to be used as a curling pond, and to be let off during summer. The first site tried was found unsuitable, and another selected, which was found to serve the purpose admirably; a bank or damhead of considerable length was erected at great expense, by means of which several acres of ground can be put under water, forming a handsome and capacious pond which bears the name of the Green Loch. The rights of the

Curlers to the use of this loch during the winter months are protected by a clause inserted by the Town Council in the lease granted to the tenant of the Moor farm, on which it is situated. After the construction of the Green Loch, the Black Loch was seldom played upon, as (from the fact that there are several springs in it which do not readily freeze, and that a young lad was some years ago drowned there through the breaking of the ice) it had come to be regarded as a rather dangerous place.

The Ward Loch, situated (as has been stated) on the farm of Blackaddie, was last granted to the Curlers by the Duke of Buccleuch in the year 1857. This was not, however, an original grant, but the restoration of a privilege enjoyed at some previous time but withdrawn during a period of thirty-five years. How long it had been enjoyed previous to its withdrawal and what was the reason of its being so withdrawn do not appear in the records of the Society. The letter from His Grace's Chamberlain on the subject says—"The Curling Society of Sanquhar are to have the privilege of forming and maintain-

ing a curling pond on the farm of Blackaddie during the pleasure of the Duke of Buccleuch on that part of the lands called 'The Ward,' such pond to be continued from the 1st November to the 1st of March in each year." This privilege was kindly renewed in the year 1872, and is a great convenience to the Society.

The forming and maintaining of these Lochs have of course entailed upon the Society a considerable expense. Some hundreds of pounds have in this way been spent at one time and another, but what is that to a Society of Curlers bent on the enjoyment of their favourite game. The more wealthy have contributed handsomely, and not a member who had the ability but is found ready to bear a fair share of the burden.

JUVENILE CLUB.

In the earlier years of the history of the Society there was, as is elsewhere stated, besides the regular rinks which played all the public games, what was called the "corps-de-reserve," composed of the youngsters who were learning

the game, and who were presided over by an officer appointed by the Society. This appointment was made annually at the business meeting of the Society for many years, the last holder of the office being the late James Black, burgh officer, in 1854, since which time, till recently, the practice would appear to have been abandoned. This was revived in 1872 by the formation of a Juvenile Club,* to which a medal, raised by public subscription, was presented, and which is played for annually in the same way as the medal of the Senior Club. A "corps-de-reserve" was appointed by the Society with the customary powers pertaining to that office. That appointment is presently held by Mr William Murdoch. The Club consists of five rinks, comprising within its ranks, we have no doubt, many who will at some future time maintain the honour and fame of the parish in curling.

* It would be well if other clubs followed the good example set by the Sanquhar, and brought up their youth in the way they should go.

"WHEN MARYBURN PLAYED BROOMHILL."

(By "Rockwood.")

IT is a common saying that "On the turf as under it all men are equal." This is no doubt so far true, but there is no equality like that of men met on the icy bosom of some quiet moorland loch in Scotland to engage in the "roaring game." According to your ability as a curler is your station in the rink, the peasant meets the peer on an equal footing, pride is unknown, and poverty is not recognised, not even debt. Politics there are none on the icy board, and the most ultra-Radical will rush forward with open hand to congratulate the most unyielding Conservative on the successful manner in which he has drawn a shot to the tee, or removed the winning stone of the opposing rink. While the frost lasts there is no agricultural distress, no law of hypothec, nor game law; all is curling and "beef and greens," dinners and whisky toddy, and good cheer. Nor are the poor forgotten, for each day parish rinks meet to play matches

in which the stakes are meal for to fill the mouths of the destitute, or coals to replenish their fires, and keep them warm during the cold weather. And what a grand game is curling! "Ay, ay, curling is the best of all games, to be sure," says the enthusiast. It may be pleasant to the racing man to witness the horse which he has backed to win him a fortune shoot out from his "field" near the post at Newmarket, and win by a length or so; but what about the feverish half a minute just before; and ask the keen courser how he felt before the roar which tells him how his dog has drawn out a clear lead for first turn in the last tie for the cup on the Altcar plains. No, there is no gambling fever in curling; and yet, what an amount of healthy excitement. Can the "supple-wristed" golfer, as he sees his ball swinging to the sea-breeze which comes over from Arran, clear the Cardinal at Prestwick or roll "dead" from a long put in the velvet turf of North Berwick, feel more proud then than when he sees his stone tread a port which the opposing rink thought impassable, and with a "soop" or two from the besom of the skip lie shot at the

tee? And you yachting men of blue serge and pipe-clayed shoes, glorious and free as your pastime is, ask John Houston of "the terrible Fiona" whether he prefers the "heep, heep, hurrah!" as he shoves the helm "up" and "all standing" gybes through the smoke of the winning gun to the loud roar which proclaims his success in "chipping a winner" on the pond of the Thistle Club at Largs. No; for genuine enjoyment, say sportsmen of all classes in Scotland, "gi'e me curling." But for a "bonspiel."

In the memory of the oldest curler of the Maryburn Club, it had been customary for that club to play against the Broomhill. Other matches fell to be played in season—Maryburn against Marchdale, Maryburn against Dryford, &c.—but the match of the season, and one of the first to be played owing to the fickleness of frost, was the most interesting, that against the men of Broomhill. Nor from the Broomhill side was it looked at from a less interesting point of view; indeed, it had been the taunt of Broomhill men all summer on the bowling-green and in the cattle showyard, that however successful the

Maryburn might be in other games and pursuits the Broomhill men were their superiors on the ice. It was in vain for the men of Maryburn to argue that so far as records had been kept they had won as many contests as the Broomhill lads, and that for the last ten years the contest had resulted "game and game." The answer of Broomhill to that was—"We had not a losing rink out of our full six against you last year." This was true, and "sair to thole," and so when the last frost set in hard as a horn each skip or captain arranged his rink, and from sunrise to sunset it was nothing but "soopin'," and "gairdin'," and "drawin'," and "liftin'"—and all for practice to beat the men of Broomhill. On the Broomhill pond they were scarcely less idle.

It is about the fifth day of the strong ice, and the players are some shoving them before them with their brooms, and some drawing them behind them with strings—taking their curling stones to the Potlid Cottage, or Curler's Haven, as the little brick building on the bank of the pond has been named, when the Secretary, in a quiet inofficious way, draws a letter from his pocket,

and with a shout of "Are ye here, skips a'?" intimates the contents, which are, that the umpire of the Royal Caledonian Club, who had been by arrangement elected joint umpire in the annual bonspiel, appointed that Maryburn and Broomhill should meet, six rinks a-side, on Loch Downan, at eleven o'clock on Thursday first.

"That's the morn, lads," adds the Secretary, "so get your rinks in order. Whatever men are gaun maun tell the stanes they want tae Wattie Anderson, and he'll have them at the Loch side the morn's mornin'. I only hope the best of ye will hae nae excuse."

There is considerable agitation amongst the skips of the different rinks and their men, the former wishing to have as strong sides as possible. And so the questions run: "You can go, Dugald?" "Ay;" and "You Tamson?" "Weel, I'll try."

"Oh, nae tries; ye're doon. Can you get, Wilson?"

"Oh, I could get, but it's market day the morn, and I would ——"

"Oh, never mind market days; ye're doon—that mak's the rink."

In this manner rinks are made up, and with a parting dram at the nearest "howff," arrangements are made for conveyance to Loch Downan, a nice quiet moorland sheet which lies central to the two clubs, or about five miles from Maryburn.

Keen nips the frost during the night, and the curler wakes delightfully in the morning to find the windows dimmed with fantastic wreaths. There is a crust of ice on the water in the ewer, but without feeling cold he laves himself as if he were at a mountain well on a summer day, reflecting, as he thinks of the calm sheet on Loch Downan, that "the stanes will be hirstlin' ayont the day." Breakfast of the "halesome parritch" over, he dons his topcoat and muffler, and pulling his Kilmarnock bonnet well over his ears, with curling-stone handles suspended at each side from his shoulders by a string, and broom in hand, he is off for the Black Bull, the usual place of rendezvous. Here by the time of his arrival are gathered full four or five of the Maryburn rinks, and here, as the late Dr Norman Macleod used to sing, are—

"There's braw J. O. Fairlie (he's there late and early),
Better curlers than he or Hugh Conn canna be."

Though the beards and moustaches of each are grizzled with their frozen breath, and the perspiration on the loose threads of their Tweed homespuns into a nice fretted silver work, they never complain of cold. Fresh and ruddy, they are anxious for the fray. The traps to convey them to Loch Downan come rattling round the corner from the back-yard, and there is a general roll-call of skips. "Here ye are, callants!" cries the leader of the rink so denominated. "Are ye a' here?" "A' here?—ay and fit!" replies his leader. All rinks are full but Tam Wilson of the Townhead, who dashes up excitedly as if afraid of missing the game amidst a volley of banter from all sides. Packed as close as herrings in a barrel, they are now all ready for the road, and the machines are soon rattling along the road to Loch Downan, five miles off. It is not long after nine and the sun is shining out, and giving a beautiful tinge of pink to the snow-white draperies of the trees—the graceful larch and the thin trailing garments of the birch. The whole forest is in ball costume of the finest muslin and lace, and the dress of each tree would

excite the envy of the most lovely clad belle of a West-End assembly. Through frosted arches and arbours, here and there frightening a wild duck from the unfrozen water at some burn linn, the Maryburn party rattle along, the chaff and fun in the carriages keeping pace with the horses. A slow climb up a steep hill or brae brings them on the moorland, and after going a mile at a brisk pace Loch Downan appears in view. Sweetly nestled 'midst bracken and heather, it rarely mirrors the face of man in the summer time, save it be that of the anxious shepherd searching for some wandering ewe that likes to be alone at the lambing, or the sportsman in August who, too done up to take his straight line in the beat, steals along the edge, not unexpectant of a chance shot at a snipe. Save the blackcock who likes to sit on the birch trees which fringe its top, and the merry little coot, there is little life even "during the season" at Loch Downan.

Soon the curlers, however, come rattling forward to the muster place, some in gigs, some in the now common waggonettes of the village posting establishments, and not a few farmers

on foot, having come some three or four miles across the country as the crow flies. Wattie Anderson is earliest of the henchmen forward with the carts, and has fixed the gathering-place on the bank—"the same place," he will tell you, believing in luck, as "the cairt was set doon when Maryburn gied Broomhill that awfu' thrashin' this time sax years." As each curler arrives, he picks out his stones from the crowd—the minister, his neat, little light-grey "32-pounders" from the rock of Ailsa Craig; "Big" Davidson, from the Upper Ward, his 44-pound Crawfordjohns; while cautious Jamie Creelman, from Ayrshire, screws his "siller minted" prize handles in a beautiful new pair from the deep blue "channel" stane of Burnock Water. The skips assemble round the umpire at his call, and the names having been written on pieces of paper are placed in two hats. The first draw results in nothing of importance, nor does the second; but when

MARYBURN (DAVIE HOGG), *against* BROOMHILL (J. WILSON),

is read there is a cheer all round, for the two

crack rinks of the clubs have met. The rules to be observed are, adds the umpire at the finish of the draw, the rules of the Caledonian Curling Club. Soon all are engaged in sweeping the ice, and setting the "crampits," and the battle commences. Directions and expostulations, with shouts of "Up hands, and soop him up," follow so quickly that a stranger might imagine that one of those ancient clan feuds were being settled. As the late Sir Alex. Boswell used to sing in describing a match between two imaginary skips, it is said:—

"*Dambuck.*—Johnnie Gray, mak' this your rest,
A guid, calm shot is aye the best;
He's fled, it's raging like a pest—
Oh! what's come owre you, Johnnie?
Lochside.—Stand on, Peat Bog, and gie's a gaird,
I ken ye can play cautious, laird;
Just lie ahint our stane a yaird;
I like ye weel—that's bonnie!"

Davie Hogg, the skip of the "Minister's or Manse" rink, as it had been called, has taken up his position on the tee alongside of "lang John Wilson, of the Broomhill Callants." Davie, it had been remarked once or twice during the

morning, "is looking real respectable." Not that he is particularly well dressed, but that a new jacket, or what is better known in Scotland as "a sleeved waistcoat," a body of tweed, to which thick sleeves of moleskin have been attached, had taken the place of the threadbare coat, which, stained and tattered with working the freestone blocks at his trade of mason, had made him conspicuous on the home pond. There was but one place it could come from everybody knew, and that was the Manse; indeed the truth was that the minister, who was reputed fully better at curling than at preaching, had Davie's condition considered long ere the frost set in, and the garment was the joint production of the needles of his wife and daughter. No one, however, dared to joke the skip on his new coat, and the close survey of his fellow-workman and drinking companion in many a heavy bout—Walter Anderson finishing up in a slow wink—was the nearest thing to an allusion to it. Not that Wattie envied him; for, with a bottle of whisky in the inside of his moleskin rag and a glass in the side pocket, he considered he had

the finest job in the world, running from rink to rink treating the players to a dram, and on each occasion scoring one for himself. Even Davie Hogg would have envied Wattie's situation at another game; but whatever could be said about him, he at least preferred *curling* to drink.

Slowly the game progressed, the minister playing well, and receiving the greatest praise from Davie; and Davie, "drawing," "chipping," and "inwicking," in a most wonderful manner, earned every thread and button of his new coat. Let "Lang" John Wilson play his best he was no match for the Maryburn mason. At the twelfth head, however, owing to the bad leading shots of "The Manse rink," Broomhill lay four shots, and though Davie played a careful inwick with his last to reduce the count, it proved in vain, and Maryburn's lead of five at the time was reduced to one. The next head the Broomhill men got level, and Davie Hogg became both anxious and dry. Fortunately, Wattie, who was flitting about from rink to rink carrying good news and bad—how "Brown was five up but Currie was six down," how "Campbell was peels at the tenth

head," &c.,—all of which information, now gradually becoming more interesting, is retailed with a dram, arrives on the spot.

The Maryburn men have a good "stiff one" all round from the same glass, and generously help their opponents, but on the Maryburn men the whisky seems to have most effect. The minister "soops" harder than ever, and Davie, relieved by "a bit oath" when the former goes down the rink, shouted more clearly and lustily, and encouraged his men. Thanks to a "roarin'" shot from Davie, which lifted the Broomhill winner, Maryburn scored two, and added another to it the next head. An odd shot they lose at the sixteenth, so that on starting the seventeenth the Maryburn are two up, with only four heads to play. The game is now getting very exciting, and to beat his opponent is quite enough of success for Davie to think about. But Wattie is at the rink side again with bad tidings. No more interesting information was carried by Wellington's aides-de-camp at Waterloo than Wattie carried on Loch Downan from rink to rink. Eagerly the Maryburn men crowd round

him to hear with silence that "Currie was down five at the twentieth head;" that "Brown was four down at the nineteenth;" and that "unless Davie Hogg has half a dozen shots to spare, Maryburn will have to gang hame a second time a loser."

Thanks to the good leading of Jack Hodge, and the careful play of the blacksmith, Watson, and the minister, Davie has been enabled, without much skill on his part, to add another to his score, and at the end of the eighteenth head the game is marked—Maryburn (Hogg), 18; Broomhill (Wilson), 13. Slow and careful is the curling for victory in the nineteenth, every player doing what was asked of him, but with his last, John Wilson makes such a beautiful "inwick" on to the face of his first and second, which are on the edge of the tee, with his last stone, that without a grumble the game has to be called—Broomhill, 14; Maryburn, 18. Both skips whisper to their leads to be cautious, and the twentieth head commences with some splendid play, every stone being put down according to direction. Not a stone is tee high, and when the minister goes

down to play he has poor choice before him, as Broomhill lie two shots both well guarded. There is nothing for it but to lift the guard with his first, and in doing this he is fortunate in partly clearing off the guard to the second also. "It was weel played—weel played. I couldna ha'e askit better," said Hogg. But the next stone from the opposition partly closed the channel again. Yet a little more than half of the shot was bare, and it was impossible to draw past guard and remove it. Never did the minister exhort Davie to give up the dram-shop and lead a better and more exemplary life (for Davie's only claim to a character was based on the fact that he "skippit the minister's rink") than he did the minister to be careful and cautious. "Jist tak' hauf of the stane, and for the sake of the whole parish of Maryburn dinna be strong—jist a canny cuff on its cheek, and lie yersel'." Cautiously does the minister deliver his stone on the ice. That it is rightly laid on is certified by the cry of Davie to "wait on him, boys; oh, but he's richt, oh, but he's a gran' ane!"

"Not a cowe! not a cowe. He's just the

strength." A rub of his own besom, as he clears the guard, gives it a little extra strength, and knocking out the winner, it lies first shot. A shake of the hand—not the cool, formal hand-shake of every day, but a firm grasp, and an up-and-down motion like the working of a pump-handle—convey the intense feelings of appreciation of Davie Hogg to the minister. The stone, however, can be removed, but this the next stone fails to do, and Davie claps a splendid guard to it, just two feet over the hog score. "Lang" Wilson, however, is not to be denied admittance to the inner circle, and raising one of the outlying shots of his side it removes the minister's champion, and Broomhill is again the winner, and with a stone well guarded. The "wick and curl" in-shot of Davie fails, and Wilson counts his head without playing his last stone, which if played up amongst the others might alter positions unfavourably for his own side. The "crampits" are now laid for the last head—the game standing: Broomhill (Wilson), 15; Maryburn (Hogg), 18. So far as the game goes, the odds are much in favour of the latter; but it is

the honour of the whole parish they are playing for, and in comparing the totals of four rinks which have finished, Maryburn is two down, while the fifth rink (Currie's) playing their last head are also two down, and, as Wattie Anderson remarks "lying verra bad." It is a serious business, and the players who have finished crowd round the rinks of the "cracks" to see the end, but quietly, on the suggestion of the umpire, withdraw to the bank, as their weight at either side is liable to cause the ice to sink and twist. Play commenced by the Maryburn man striking out a "potlid" shot of the Broomhill and leaving his own in its stead. The Broomhill shot is out of line and a little strong, goes "through all ice," and is dead. The Maryburn man puts in a splendid short guard just inside the house—so far so well, there could not be a better commencement. Broomhill failing to lift the short guard, the Maryburn man, according to Davie's directions, puts down another guard just over the hog score, so that there being now two stones in direct line between the player and the winning shot, it is not possible to remove the latter

directly. The Broomhill fourth stone is wasted on the outer guard, as it took it a little too full, and running it out without doing damage, lies a half-guard in its stead. The Maryburn fourth stone is a grandly drawn second shot, just clear of the guards, and the Broomhill fifth missing to catch the latter on the face and wick or cannon on to the winner, the minister "claps on a bonnie gaird," which completely stops any inlet in that direction. The third shot is beautifully drawn on the right side for Maryburn, after the opposing player had failed to draw past the guard and catch the winner, and then "Lang" Wilson and Davie Hogg, amidst not a little excitement, walk down the rink to put up the last four stones of the game. "Lang" Wilson takes the advice he himself has given to the last player, and tries a nice draw past the half-guard on the edge of the hog, but succeeds only in removing without doing damage to the short guard inside the house. Maryburn lies three, and it is certainly Hogg's play to completely cover the winning shot. This he certainly has played to do, but his stone taking a half-curl to the right as it finished, Wilson is

left with a port which allows him a *by no means certain*, but *possible*, draw to the winner. Though he is down-hearted with the knowledge that he cannot win the game, he plays it to perfection, and, amidst cries of, "Weel curled, sir," "Oh, but it's a rare ane," Hogg sees his winning stone removed, and that of the opponent's lying almost in its stead—a little more open, perhaps, but a difficult shot to take. As the minister and he study the positions of the stones, much in the same manner that a chess-player watches his knights and pawns, Watty arrives with the by no means cheering intelligence that Currie has lost a shot the last head, and that Maryburn is down five shots on the total of the other five rinks. Unless, therefore, the winner can be removed, Maryburn will be beaten. Remove the winner, and Maryburn lies three shots, which, with the three the rink has to the good, gives victory to the parish.

Slowly Hogg walks down the rink turning round every few steps to see how it looks. It *is* a hard shot to play—not half of the winner is clear—but it must be removed for the honour of

Maryburn. Refusing a dram proffered from Wattie, he wipes the sole of his stone clear with his "cowe," also the ice in front of him, and taking a good, clear, straight look, as a rifleman would look at a target, at the objectionable stone, he raises his arm, and the curling destiny of Maryburn is out of his power. A yell of ecstacy from the minister, who is down on his knees looking along the ice, assured him the shot is a good one. "He's got him, he's got him fair." "He's on the gaird," cries the opposing side, but slowly, for it was not too hard delivered; the stone draws past everything save the winner, which is knocked clear of the house, and Davie Hogg lies first shot, and the rink four up, so that Broomhill has been beaten by two shots. If there has been any doubt on the bank as to the result of the match, it has been removed by the hearty manner in which the minister shakes hands with the skip—not to say the wild dance of Wattie Anderson, followed by his production from his inside pocket of the bottle. No dram could have had a greater relish than that which follows, for a keener match at curling has never

been played. Soon all are seated in the carriages again, and driving home through the keen, grey, frosty atmosphere, which follows the sundown. Flushed with victory, all are as happy as birds in summer, and nothing prevails but good humour. There is a halt at the Manse, and great is the joy of the kind wife of the minister to hear that Maryburn has won, and that the Manse rink saved the game.

And Davie Hogg's health is proposed in the Manse dining-room with three times three; ay, and the minister is proud too to hear from Davie's reply that he did his duty that day, and "is a credit to the rink, let alane the parish;" and the pockets of Davie's new coat are sorely tested with the present of a pound of tea for his wife, and some "odds and ends for the bairns," which evince the kindness of the Manse folk. What a night, too, follows at the Black Bull after the beef and greens. Tumblers and hot-water jugs serve the purpose of stones, and the games are fought over again. Then follows that good old curling song of the Ettrick Shepherd's from the Blacksmith, with a chorus lustily joined in by all—

"I've played at quoitin' mony a day,
And maybe I may da'et again,
But still unto myself I say,
This is *no* the channel-stane.
Oh, for a channel-stane!
The fell guid game the channel-stane;
There's no a game that ere I saw
Can match auld Scotland's channel-stane."

And with a chorus to the last verse of "Soop him up," "Hurra! curlers we," to the last verse, ends the match and the account of that memorable day "when Maryburn played Broomhill."—(From "Stories of Scottish Sports.")

GALL'S "GABIONS."

The following extracts are taken from the "Muses Threnodie; or, Mirthful Mournings on the death of Mr Gall," by Mr H. Adamson, and explain the meaning of the word "Gabions." This work contains very early references to both the games of golf and curling. The original edition was published in 1638 and is now practically extinct, and even the reprint of 1774, with explan-

atory notes and observations by James Cant, is by no means common.

The two following poems were composed by a citizen of Perth, a gentleman of considerable reputation for wit and learning; they have been erroneously called and known by the name of "Gall's Gabions."

The first contains a ludicrous and hudibrastic description of the furniture of Mr George Ruthven's closet, which that venerable old gentleman used to call his *Gabions*, being a collection of many curiosities humorously described by our facetious poet. It is beyond the reach of ordinary capacities, therefore it is seldom taken notice of by common readers.

The next poem is an elegiac lamentation on the death of Mr John Gall, a young gentleman, handsome, facetious, and learned. The poet keeps himself behind the curtain, and introduces Ruthven and Gall upon the stage, who are the only speakers, who give an account of the antiquities of Perth and its environs. Gall appears throughout the poem to be the principal person; therefore custom has falsely given the name of *Gall's Gabions* to both poems.

The attentive reader will soon perceive that the first poem which is short ought to be called Ruthven's Gabions, if a name must be given to it, and it has no manner of connection with the second, where Gall only appears.

The meaning of the word *Gabion*, as it is used in the poem, is not to be sought for in any dictionary; it was of the venerable old gentleman Mr Ruthven's own coining, and it was well enough understood among his select friends to mean nothing else but the miscellaneous curiosities in his closet, humorously described in the poem.

We perceive that the warmest friendship subsisted between this triumvirate of literati.

Mr George Ruthven was descended from the noble family of that name. He was a physician and surgeon in Perth, and about ninety-two years of age when the two poems were published at the request of the celebrated Sir William Drummond of Hawthornden. He was about thirteen years old at the Reformation, and remembered the magnificent religious houses with their stately steeples, and was capable to lament their ruin in 1559 by the fury of the populace, which was

discountenanced by Knox, who regretted the desolation of these noble buildings.

Mr John Gall, younger (his father being of the same name), was a merchant, well educated, of sweet dispositions and pregnant wit, and much esteemed. His premature death of a consumption, occasioned the following elegiac descriptive poem.

Henry Adamson, the author of the two poems, was educated for the pulpit, and appeared to have been a gentleman of considerable abilities, and a good classical scholar; he wrote some Latin poems above mediocrity. His relations were of considerable rank among the citizens of Perth. He was the son of James Adamson, who was Dean of Guild in 1600, when Gowrie was murdered, and was provost in 1610-11. Our poet died unmarried in the year after the poems were published. He was known to and esteemed by Drummond of Hawthornden, the poet laureate of that age. Mr Adamson was importuned by his friends to publish the two poems; he resisted their solicitations, but the request of his friend Mr Drummond at last prevailed. Here follows the poem.

The Inventory of the Gabions in Mr George Ruthven's closet or cabinet.

Amongst innumerable other articles we find—

"His hats, his hoods, his bells, his bones,
His alley bowls, *his curling stones;*
The sacred games to celebrate,
Which to the Gods are consecrate." (Page 5.)

Again at page 17—

THE MUSES THRENODIE.

Of Mr George Ruthven the tears and mournings,
Amidst the giddie course of fortune's turnings,
Upon his dear friend's death Mr John Gall,
Where his rare ornaments bare a part, and wretched Gabions all.

THE FIRST MUSE.

"Now first my *Bowes* begin this doleful song;
No more with clangors let your shafts be flung,
In fields abroad, but in my cabin stay,
And help me for to mourn till dying day.
With dust and cobwebs cover all your heads.
And take you to your *matins* and your *beads:*
A *requiem* sing unto that sweetest soul
Which shines now *fainted* above other pole.
And ye my *clubs*, you must no more prepare
To make your *balls* flee whistling in the air:*

* "Perth stands in the middle of a beautiful green about an English mile in length, and divides it into two, called the North and South Inches, where the inhabitants have for ages

But hing your heads and bow your crooked crags,
And dress you all in sackcloath and in rags:
No more to see the sun or fertile fields;
But closely keep your mourning in your bields;
And for your part the trible to you take,
And when you cry, make all your crags to crake,
And shiver when you sing, alas! for *Gall!*
Ah! if our mourning might thee now recall!
And ye my *loadstones* of *Lednochian* lakes,*
Collected from the loch where watrie snakes
Do much abound, take unto you a part,
And mourn for *Gall*, who lov'd you with his heart.
In this sad dump and melancholick mood,
The *burdown* ye must bear, not on the flood
Or frozen watrie plaines, but let your tuning
Come help me for to weep by mournfull cruning.
And ye the rest my *Gabions* less and more,
Of noble kind, come help me for to roare!
And of my woefull weeping take a part,
Help to declare the dolour of mine heart:
How can I choose, but mourne? when I think on
Our games Olympick like in times agone."

exercised themselves during the spring and autumnal seasons with golf clubs and balls. This pastime is interrupted during the summer season by the luxuriancy of the grass, which affords rich pasture for the milch cows belonging to the inhabitants."

* "*Lednoch* is situated about four computed miles north from Perth, on the banks of Almond River; about this place the best curling stones were found. The gentlemen of Perth, fond of this athletic winter diversion on the frozen river, sent and brought from *Lednoch* their curling stones."

EXTRACTS FROM THE HISTORY OF KILMARNOCK.

By Archibald M'Kay. (3rd Edition, 1864.)

Page 114. A writer of the olden time, when speaking of this district, says "it abounds in strong and valiant men;" and several remarkable instances of longevity among the inhabitants of Kilmarnock during the last century are on record, one of which is that of a porter, named John Craig, who was able to carry parcels at the advanced age of 105. Another is that of an individual who, according to the Kirk Session Records, had reached the wonderful age of 118 years.* Perhaps it was mainly to out-door recreations and athletic sports and games, which were then common, that the men of Cunningham were indebted for that robustness of constitution alluded to. In the more genial months of the year, bowl playing,† throwing the stone, wrestling,

* "1716, Septemr. 18.—To ane old man ane 118 years, on precept, 12s. Scots."—*Kirk Treasurer's Book.*

† In a minute of Council, dated 5th March 1764, mention is made of "a Shooting Prize of £5" having been placed,

&c., were the principal pastimes;‡ and, in the winter season, "When Boreas blew his blasts sae bauld," the game of curling, which prevailed here as far back as the year 1644, was a favourite amusement. The curlers of one quarter of the town would frequently challenge, as they still do, those of another, and persons of all ranks, young and old, would join in the *bonspeil.*

about the year 1740, in the hands of a Mr Paterson, "towards erecting a bowling green, and purchasing bowls, as being thought a more agreeable diversion than shooting."

‡ We have never heard any of our aged townsmen talk of the May-pole, or of the rural festival of the "First of May" being observed in the district. The following entry, however, in the Town Treasurer's Book for 1780, would imply that it was celebrated about that period:—"Paid Robert Fraser, *for dressing a May-pole*, 2s. 6d. sterling."

The May-poles, or "Simmer Trees," as they were called, were prohibited by Act of Parliament in the reign of Queen Mary. "And gif onie women," says the Act, "or uthers about simmer-trees sing and makis perturbation to the Queenis Lieges in the passage throw Burrowes and uther Landward Tounes: the women perturbatoures for skafrie of money or utherwise, sall be taken, handled, and put upon the Cuck-stules of everie Burgh or Towne." After the restoration of Charles the Second, this apparently harmless festival was again revived; and it is still customary, we believe, for the youths of several places in Scotland to "go a Maying" on the first day of May.

The scenes of their contests were usually the mill-dams in the vicinity, where with the best of feeling they strove with each other for the palm of victory; and when their "roaring play," as Burns terms it, was over, it was not uncommon for them to meet together by some "canty ingle," where they would regale themselves with "pap-in,"* or home-brewed ale, the favourite beverage of the time, and spend the evening in mirth and harmony.

The Cross, too, strange as it may appear, was sometimes converted into a curling pond. The late Robert Montgomery, Esq. of Bogston, who was the eldest son of Bailie John Wilson, merchant, Kilmarnock, and who adopted the name of Montgomery on inheriting the above named estate, told our informant, the late James Dobie, Esq. of Crummock, Beith, that his father (Bailie Wilson) curled, in 1740, at the Cross of Kilmarnock, for twenty-three successive days, excepting Sundays. The water was raised from a well—probably the present Cross Well—and was dammed up for the purpose. The winter of 1740 was very severe, and long talked of as the hard winter.

* A mixture of small beer and whisky.

At the present time, Kilmarnock contains many *keen* and *scientific* curlers; and judging from the minute book of one of the oldest clubs, they have often won laurels in their contests with the players of other towns.

Besides the facility afforded by our streams for the practice of the game, there are two excellent lochs in the district, one at New Farm, rented by the various clubs, and one at Craufurdland Castle, to which the proprietor of that ancient mansion makes all welcome. (*Here follows an account of the game, as published in the "Kilmarnock Treatise on Curling."*)

"It has long been practised in the parish of Kilmarnock. As a proof of this, we find it stated in the *Life* of the celebrated William Guthrie, who in the year 1644 was ordained minister of Fenwick (then called New Kilmarnock, and separated in 1642 from the parish of Kilmarnock), that he was fond of the innocent recreation which *then prevailed*, among which was playing on the ice."*

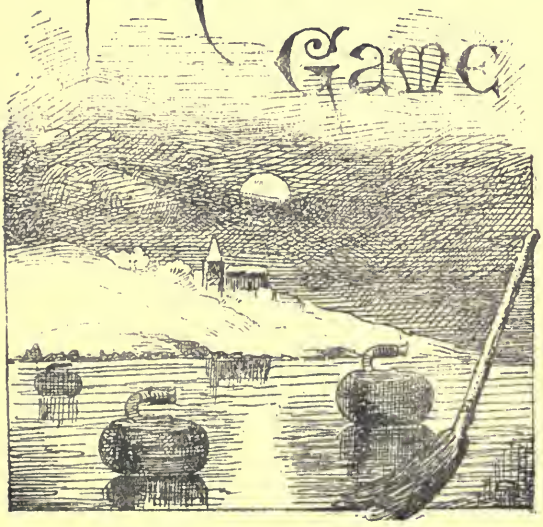
* Other games, such as shovel-board, seem to have been practised in the olden time in Kilmarnock, and to have drawn

A curling stone, said to have been used by Mr Guthrie, is still preserved at Craufurdland Castle. Compared with those of the present day it is truly antique in appearance.

A neatly executed monument, bearing the following inscription, was recently erected to the memory of Mr Guthrie in the churchyard of Fenwick:—"In memory of the Rev. William Guthrie, first minister of this parish, and author of the *Christian's Great Interest.* Born 1620; ordained, 1644. Ejected by Prelatic persecution, 1664: worn out by labours and sufferings, he died 1665, and was interred in the Church of Brechin. His active and self-denied ministry, through the Divine blessing, produced a deep and lasting impression. This stone is erected, 1854, as a token of gratitude, by the Christian public."

forth the censure of the ecclesiastical authorities. For example, we find the following regarding it in the Session Record:—"March 23 1693.—This day report was given to the Sess. of some intimly and unseasonable gamin at shufle-board, which the Session resented, and appointed it to be discharged."

The Roaring Gang



THE ROARING GAME.

Gone are the vernal charms of flowery May,
Fled Summer's prime, and tints of Autumn gay;
Congealed by Frost are glassy Lake and Stream,
'Mid Snow and Ice grim Winter reigns supreme.

Forth trooping from their haunts a boisterous crew,
With motley garb, but genial hearts and true;
Heedless of wintry blast,—of pastime fond,
They speed like clansmen to the Curling Pond.

And now, 'midst tongues and careless glee,
With many a homely joke, and sally free;
The jostling Stones and Cramps obstruct the way,
And hopes run high, in prospect of the fray.

Drawn are the Rinks, where lines and curves combine,
The Tee, the House, Hogg Score, and Central Line;
The Cramps are laid, the Champions ready stand,
With eye intent, and trusty Broom in hand.

Pause we awhile, to note the presence there
Of forms familiar, and of prowess rare;
Knights of renown in Curling Heraldry,
And Landers, Mentor of the D. C. C.*

Right well, I ween, are known through country side,
The Jousts redoubtable our teams provide;
The stubborn foeman's ranks must yield the day,
Opposed by vet'ran Skips like Dawson, Craig, or Gray.

* Dalkeith Curling Club.

Now each, in turn, will utmost skill display,
To "dirl" the Stones along the slippery way ;
Excited Sweepers coax the laggards on ;
All speak at once, and furious grows the fun.

The fitful tide of battle ebbs and flows,
Excitement waxing warmest near the close ;
Till waving Broom and ringing shout proclaim,
A well earned vict'ry in triumphant strain.

No angry feeling ever lingers here,
The panting warriors join in Nip or Beer ;
The savoury Pie invites us to repast,
And each extended hand is warmly grasped.

Oft in the coming years, with memory fond,
Will I recall those fights on Lothian Pond ;
And chant, in measured verse, the growing fame,
Of Scotia's Winter sport, "The Roaring Game."

John J. Stitt.

NORMAN MACLEOD'S CURLING SONG.

"Another of his favourite songs was one he composed while on a visit to a friend in Ayrshire, who was an enthusiastic curler. Norman, who never even attempted to curl, heartily enjoyed the exciting scene on the ice, and the keenness dis-

played by 'tenant and laird' as they strove together for the honours of the 'roaring game':—

"Curling Song."

"Air—'*Come under my plaidie.*'

"A' nicht it was freezin', a' nicht I was sneezin'.
'Tak' care,' quo' the wife, 'gudeman o' yer cough.'
A fig for the sneezin', hurrah for the freezin',
For the day we're to play the Bonspiel on the loch!
Then get up, my braw leddy, the breakfast mak' ready,
For the sun on the snaw drift's beginnin' to blink.
Gie me bannocks or brochan, I'm aff to the lochan,
To mak' the stanes flee to the 'T' o' the rink.
Then hurrah for the curling, frae Girvan to Stirling!
Hurrah for the lads o' the besom and stane!
Ready, noo! Soop it up! Clap a guard! Steady, noo!
Oh curling abune a' the games, stands alane.

"The ice it is splendid, it canna be mended,
Like a glass ye can glowr in't an shave aff yer beard;
And see how they gaither, comin' owre the brown heather,
The master and servants, the tenant and laird.
There's braw J. O. Fairlie, he's there late and early,
Better curlers than he or Hugh Conn canna be;
Wi' the lads frae Kilwinnin', they'll send the stanes spinnin',
Wi' a *whurr* and a *curr*, till they sit roun' the 'T.'
Then hurrah for the curling, &c.

"It's an unco like story, that baith Whig and Tory,
Maun aye collyshangy, * like dogs owre a bane;

* Quarrel.

An' that a' denominations are wantin' in patience,
For nae kirk will thole * to let ithers alane.
But in fine frosty weather, let a' meet thegither,
Wi' brooms in their hauns, an' a stane near the 'T';
Then ha! ha! by my certies, ye'll see hoo a' parties
Like brithers will love and like brithers agree!
Then hurrah for the curling, &c."

—"Memoir of Norman Macleod, D.D.,"
Vol. II. p. 223.

THE CURLER'S ADDRESS TO HIS KOWE.

Air—"*The Nameless Lassie.*"

In summers past I've seen the bloom,
On mossy bank and knowe;
I'll ne'er forget thy youthful prime,
My bonny broomy kowe.
I've garlanded thy yellow tops,
I've lain beneath thy bough,
I've revell'd mid thy sweet perfume,
My bonny broomy kowe.

As mem'ry green recalls the past,
My heart is set alowe,
Wi' moistened een I gaze on thee,
My bonny broomy kowe.
Time tells on baith, your pith has gane,
And wrinkled is my brow.

* Endure.

We're no sae fresh as we hae been,
My bonny broomy kowe.

You're wizzened sair, and maist as thin,
As hairs upon my pow.
I doubt our days are nearly done,
My bonny broomy kowe.
Time warps us a', and makes us stiff,
E'en curlers keen, I trow;
Sae be content, your fate is mine,
My bonny broomy kowe.

When death comes o'er me, let my grave
Be sacred frae the plough;
For cypress, plant a golden broom,
That yet may be a kowe.
Nor rest nor peace shall ere be yours,
A' curlers hear my vow,
Unless there grow abune my head,
A bonny broomy kowe.

W. A. Peterkin (*Caberfeidgh*).

SONG.

Air—"*Here's to the year that's awa.*"

Here's to the game that we lo'e,
We'll drink it in strong mountain dew;
And here's to ilk ane
Wha can play up a stane
On a rink that is keen, strong, and true.

Here's to the cauld wint'ry blast,
That gars our hearts beat true and fast ;
And the next toast we'll drink
Is the loud roaring rink,
Auld Scotia's sons play to the last.

E. P.

PAROCHIAL SPIEL.

BETWEEN THE PARISHES OF NEW CUMNOCK AND SANQUHAR, JANUARY 25, 1848.

THE curlers keen o' Black Johan,
Wi' those of Wanlockhead, man,
For Cumnock loch, in contest teuch,
Up winding Nitha sped, man.

The morning star shone frae afar,
The way was dry and clean, man ;
Their hearts beat high their skill to try,
On glassy field convene, man.

New Cumnock sons, wi' brooms and stones,
Their Sanquhar friends salute, man ;
'Twas shaking hands through a' the bands,
And scatheless the dispute, man.

The tickets drawn, then man to man,
Upon the glittering field, man ;
By hand and eye, each scheme they try,
Might fa', but never yield, man.

'Twas roaring play throughout the day,
The ice was smooth and keen, man;
Just measurement gave all content
Who round the tee convene, man.

Onlookers here, from far and near,
Sped over bog and lea, man,
From banks o' Doon and Crawfordjohn,
Came here the play to see, man.

Swart Sanquhar got twa extra shot,
They were so near a par, man,
In humour good they all conclude
The bluidless icy war, man.

When spiels begin, how they may en',
Or who may victory claim, man,
'Twas said of old, and now enrolled,
Ice is a slippery game, man.

—From "Poems and Prose Tales" by James Kennedy, Sanquhar, 1848.

"SOOPIN'S UP."

"SOUTERING."—There were, towards the close of the last century, a rink of seven players upon the Lochmaben ice, all shoemakers by trade —Scotice, *Souters*. So expert in the curling art were those Knights of the Lapstone, that for a

number of years they not only fought and conquered all who opposed them, but conquered so frequently, without allowing their opponents to reckon even a solitary shot, that the phrase arose —we *soutered them.* So vain at length did they become, that they set the whole of Scotland at defiance upon the ice. They were, however, at last completely overthrown by a specially selected rink of local players.

Of these doughty carls, to give an idea of their collective prowess, it was said of Deacon Jardine that he could *birse a needle* with his stone: *i.e.*, he could wick a bore so scientifically, that he would undertake, having first attached, with a piece of shoemaker's wax, two needles to the side of two curling stones just the width of the one he played with apart, and upon two stones in front, similarly apart, and in the line of direction, having affixed two birses, to play his stone so accurately that in grazing through the port it should impel the birses forward through the eyes of the needles.

ANCIENT CURLING STONE.—"Last week, while

the foundation of the old house of Loig, in Strathallan, was being dug out, a curling stone of a very different shape and texture from those now generally in use in that district was discovered. It is of an oblong form, and had been neatly finished with the hammer. The initials 'J. M.' and the date '1611' are still distinctly legible, having been deeply though uncouthly engraven. This discovery affords a curious and striking proof of the antiquity of the game of curling."—*Caledonian Mercury*, 20th December 1830.

"DYKE STANES."—Forty years ago (1813) the stones were generally selected from dykes in the neighbourhood (Neilston Parish); but on one occasion a player borrowed a shoemaker's lap, or beating stone, which gave him such an advantage in playing, that the others declined playing with him unless it was laid aside.—CAIRNIE.

CANADIAN CURLING.—A Canadian farmer at Quebec, who had seen the game for the first time, gave the following description of it:—"J'ai

vu aujourd'hui une bande d'Ecossois qui jettoient des grandes boules de fer, faites comme des bombes, sur la glace; apres quoi, ils crioient *soupe, soupe;* ensuite, ils rioient comme des foux; je crois bien qu'ils sont vraiement foux." To-day I saw a band of Scotchmen, who were throwing large balls of iron like tea kettles on the ice, after which they cried, "soop, soop," and then laughed like fools. I verily believe they were fools indeed.—CAIRNIE, 1833.

About the period the foregoing story was written, cast-iron missiles of 45 lbs. to 65 lbs. weight were used by the members of the Montreal and Quebec Clubs instead of curling stones. They were found not to run so well as whin stones in mild weather, or when the sun shone bright and warm; but in general they answered their purpose fully as well, besides possessing the great advantage of not being liable to be broken.

CAST-IRON MISSILES.—These castings for curling with were made by Mr Edington of Glasgow. They were cast hollow, 10 inches by 5 inches, weighing 36 lbs., and had one sole case

hardened. They required an experienced player. Being so *keen*, they had to be played with the greatest caution, and answered particularly well for *drug* ice.

Dr Wotherspoon, Minister of Beith in 1745, was a keen and earnest curler. He came often to Lochwinnoch while the frost lasted. He frequented Strand's Inn with his curling compeers. One Saturday after a tough match, he, with his party, dined there, and sat till eleven o'clock at night. Strand's wife, Margaret Orr, a *douce* and a *serious Christian*, patted him, and whispered a hint about his public duty, the next day being the Lord's day. He replied loudly, "A minister who could not shake a sermon out of his coat sleeve is a silly cuif."

Henry Darnley, during the severe winter he was forced to spend at Peebles, was much employed in curling, chiefly on a meadow which formed part of the glebe.

Singular Shot.—The following curious

occurrence happened on the Ayrshire ice. Two parties were playing a short distance from each other—a quantity of snow, scraped off the rinks, lying between. The player having to take the winner, and being requested to play with all his strength, missed his aim, but his stone went over the intervening ice, and bulwark of snow, and actually struck off the adverse winner upon the neighbouring tee! *Q.* Should an interpolating shot of this kind be entitled to count?—*Mem. Cur. Mab.*

Curling Stones for Canada.—In 1829 two hundred pair of "Ailsa Craigs" were shipped to Canada for the use of the clubs out there.

The Rev. Adam Wadderstone, Boghead, 21st October 1842.—There is a very good anecdote told of the Rev. Adam Wadderstone, who for twenty-three years was minister of the parish of Bathgate, and died in August 1780. Mr Wadderstone was a most excellent man, and in the temporal as well as in the spiritual happiness of his parishioners took the most lively interest. Of the manly and spirit-stirring game of

curling he was a most enthusiastic supporter, and almost upon every occasion headed his flock in their encounters with the neighbouring parishes. John Clarkson, a highly respected and worthy elder of his session, also a "true son of the broom," having, very late one Saturday evening, received a challenge from the people of the parish of Shotts, to meet the curlers of Bathgate early on the following Monday, was nonplussed how to communicate the joyful intelligence to his clergyman, being afraid to disturb him while preparing his prelections, or to arouse him out of his balmy repose. After many qualms of conscience, and several hours of restless anxiety, he made up his mind to inform him of it in the session-house on the Sunday morning. The pastor no sooner entered, than John said in a low tone, "Sir, I've something to tell you—there's to be a parish play with the Shotts folk to-morrow at"——"Whisht, man, whisht; O fie shame, John; fie shame; nae speaking to-day about warldly recreations!" The parson, however, just as he was about to enter the kirk-door, having wheeled suddenly round, returned to his friend,

who was now standing at the plate, and whispered into his ear—"But whan's the hour, John? I'll be sure and be there!!"—The foregoing anecdote is recorded in the words of the writer,—a gentleman well known to us as a good and keen curler, and who can vouch for its authenticity.

KILCONQUHAR—KEEN CURLING.—Although we believe that there *is an occasional crook to be found in every man's lot*, we never knew, until we read the following anecdote, that there was a *fixed crook peculiar to the curlers*. We are anxious to know if the individual referred to had acquired what is the perfection in the art of curling, in our opinion, *the twist of the hand*, in delivering his stones, the art by which he can overcome *biases* of the ice, and can *really play round* his opponent's stones:—"KILCONQUHAR, 1842. To show that our forefathers were as keen upon the ice in this place as what the present generation is, we have the following related to us by an old curler: That it was no uncommon thing, about fifty or sixty years ago, that they, after playing a whole day on the ice,

would retire at twilight, and have a little refreshment, and start to it again quite fresh, and play, by the aid of lanthorns lighted, until the crowing of the cock warned them to drop. It also may be stated, that, in the long and severe winter, about twenty-eight or thirty years ago, that an individual here played for six weeks, all day, excepting a few days' intermission, and that his hand actually kept the position of a person's hand after he has done holding a stone in his hand, and that it kept the *crook* for a very considerable time afterwards. The same individual is still a keen curler."

FEAT OF STRENGTH.—We are informed that there have been instances of throwing a curling stone one English mile upon ice. It was no uncommon thing in days of yore, and there are many still alive who have done it, to throw across the Kirk Loch from the Orchard to the Skelbyland—a feat not much short of the above. Upon the occasion, we believe, of a match with Tinwald, Laurie Young, the strongest player amongst them, challenged the Lochmaben party to a trial of

arm. Their president stepped out, and taking his stone, threw it with such strength across the breadth of the Mill Loch, that it stotted off the brink upon the other side, and tumbled over upon the grass. "Now," said he to Laurie, "go and throw it back again, and we'll then confess that you are too many for us."—*Mem. Cur. Mab.*

Wooden Blocks.—A correspondent mentions having heard that wooden blocks were formerly and may possibly still be in use in Arran. The Editor would feel obliged for any particulars as to size, weight, description of wood, manner of preparing the blocks, and the experiences of those who have played with them.

Communications for the Editor, *should be addressed to the care of the Publisher,* Mr Richard Cameron, 18 *George Street, Edinburgh.*

Turnbull & Spears, Printers, Edinburgh.

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